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AUTHOR Ward, Colin
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ABSTRACT

Two analogies illustrate differences in educational philosophy: the child as clay to be molded by teachers to conform to predetermined standards, and the child as a flower, tended by the teacher so that it may blossom in its own way. Case studies of delinquent children have shown that some children are able draw upon inner resources and unexplained strength to make very full use of a limited intelligence quotient or an adverse environment. How can these inner resources be discovered and built upon? The sought-after ingredient is resourcefulness, and several studies have demonstrated a link between inventive economies and childrearing that emphasizes reasoning and discussion instead of control and physical discipline. Modern society's demand for social conformity and the quiescence necessary to maintain inequality has stifled creativity. Only socially isolated groups have been able to sustain the truer form of egalitarianism which fosters real social independence and individuality. Perhaps education for resourcefulness would be a curriculum built around the arts, which foster creativity. It is noted that the performing arts provide more employment and more foreign currency for Britain than the motor industry. Many people remember the influence of a particular teacher whose resourcefulness liberated their own resourcefulness and set them in motion like a gyroscope. Perhaps it is this particular magic that is at the core of "education as if people mattered." (Contains 13 references.) (TD)

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Human Scale Education is publishing in full Colin Ward's keynote lecture 'Education for Resourcefulness' which he gave to the annual HSE conference at Dartington in April 1992. Colin Ward, town planner, environmentalist, educationist and Utopian thinker sets his sights beyond the confines of formal schooling. While the resourceful teacher can liberate resourcefulness in a student, more important in his view is the influence of the family and the workplace. Colin Ward gives examples of particular societies where these two factors clearly foster resourcefulness. First, in Shetland and Turin where openness between adults and children leads to the discussion and exploration of ideas and feelings and secondly in Emilia Romagna in North Italy where worker cooperatives and small family businesses place a premium on inventive capability. At a time when lengthening dole queues and the alienation of youth are major problems in our society Colin Ward's wide ranging and practical prescriptions for a better society offer hope for the future.

This is Number Two in a series of occasional papers about different aspects of human scale education.

Series edited by Laura Diamond and Mary Tasker.

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I AM SURE that there are people here who remember Anthony Weaver who died last December at the age of 78 after what seem to have been several different lifetimes in education. He wrote to me last summer to tell me that he was retiring for the third time, as a visiting fellow of the University of London Institute of Education where his last concern had been with education for international understanding. Many decades earlier he taught in London County Council secondary schools, at a Lycée in France, and then for ten years at a progressive school, Burgess Hill. After that he was head teacher at a school for maladjusted children, warden of a residential clinic, a teacher of teachers at Redland College, Bristol, senior lecturer in education at Whitelands College and then lecturer in education and art therapy at Goldsmiths' College.

He was in fact precisely the kind of member of the "progressive educational establishment" whose influence on the training of teachers was attacked in January 1992 by the then Secretary of State for Education, as sabotaging the Government's education reforms. Mr Clarke got it wrong of course. People like Tony Weaver had all too little influence however much they managed, simply through a rich harvest of experience, to penetrate the educational establishment. Yet Mr Clarke was in another sense quite right. Tony Weaver and others like him (and other people here will remember Robin Tanner, who rose to the heights of becoming one of Her Majesty's

Inspectors) were deeply subversive of the government ideology of education. His work for the World Education Fellowship was, after all, conducted from the Centre for Multicultural Education, he was a life-long pacifist propagandist, and, worst of all, he had fallen under the influence of Herbert Read's book *Education Through Art* seeking a schooling constructed around creativity[1].

Thirty years ago, when I was editing the monthly *Anarchy*, one of a number of articles Tony Weaver wrote for it attacked the notion that the basis of education should be the fact that then, as now, "the welfare of the state in economic competition with other states requires skilled technicians". He wasn't attacking technical education—we are all poorer for our lack of it—but was contrasting our approach to it and our assumptions about what it is for and how it is done.

His article was called *Jug and Clay, or Flower?*, and this quite well-worn analogy is still useful for us, not just in opposing the whole concept of a National Curriculum, but in considering our own agenda on "Education As If People Matter". Weaver wrote:

> The young child's mind may be likened to a jug into which the teacher pours information, as much or as little and of the kind that is thought fit. This ancient conception regards the mind as a vessel which should be made, by force if necessary, to hold what is ordained by tradition to be the best content for it. Similarly the child's character is regarded as some plastic material separate from the faculties of the mind, to be moulded into shape by the teacher, and by the type of group discipline exerted, according to definite ideas of what is good

> form. The child is not only moulded into a pattern but comes to feel that conformity is desirable and that divergence from it is idiosyncratic, suspect and subversive . . . The analogy of the flower suggests an upbringing that enables a person to blossom in his or her own way. The gardener's job is to provide the most appropriate soil and nourishment that he knows of, and to protect the tender plant from extremes of frost and scorching heat.[2]

Probably we all agree with these analogies. But the most thought-provoking observation I ever learned from Tony Weaver came from his book *They Steal for Love*, based on his four years as a warden of a residential clinic to which the London local authority sent children regarded as "pre-delinquent" and placed "in care." His book was built around seventeen case histories, and one of them was James, aged 12 on admission, who, according to the psychiatrist's report, had an IQ of 88 and was consequently one of the least gifted of the children described. Probably we are less inclined today to put such emphasis on the ability to do well in tests of Intelligence Quotient, and Weaver commented that James was "remarkable for the very full use to which he put his limited intelligence." He added:

> It is also true that a remarkable number of children, who one would think ought to be maladjusted, are not. Having apparently the same adverse factors to contend with, on account of some inner resources and unexplained strength they emerge, as it were, unscathed.[3]

I have pondered over these remarks ever since, wondering how these inner resources can be discovered and built upon, and

how others can, like James, be enabled to put to "a very full use" a limited intelligence quotient. It's a real issue that lies behind many of the problems people agonize over, as getting by in life becomes an ever more complicated task.

My wife, Harriet Ward, many years ago coined an aphorism to state this dilemma: "As the threshold of competence rises, the pool of inadequacy increases."[4]

Behind this thought lies a huge issue which doesn't only affect James and his IQ scores of forty years ago. It affects us all, even the footloose intelligentsia too superior to acquire computer skills. Moralists used to complain that capitalist industrial production reduced the craftsperson to "a sub-human condition of intellectual irresponsibility",[5] slogging away in heavy industry in the last century or doing some atomized task on the assembly-line in this one. Now those jobs have gone, whether in industry, in agriculture or in the office. As traditional sources of employment have disappeared, not just in the disastrous eighties, but all through the post-war years, a new set of political prophets has arisen, praising the trimmer, leaner, thrusting economy (notice the metaphors from the boxing ring) and scolding those atavistic Luddites who want to cling to their traditional jobs in the old heavy industries: steel, shipbuilding, heavy engineering, mining and so on.

What they are really saying is, of course, something far less acceptable. The self-made heroes of the Thatcher period are saying: "We owe nothing to inherited wealth. We've battled our way up from the bottom of the social heap. Why can't you?" Beyond this they are saying something else. They are saying, "OK. You're thick, or you wouldn't be down there. But why can't you make a bit more effort? Why don't you

make a fuller use of your limited intelligence?" They too, are influenced unconsciously by Michael Young's brilliant book from 1958, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, about the rise of a new non-self-perpetuating elite consisting of "the five per cent of the population who know what five per cent means." His satire, you will remember, introduced the formula 'M=IQ plus Effort'. If you read the book you will remember that the meritocratic society was challenged by the Populist movement of the year 2009, attacking the aim of equality of opportunity to become unequal, in favour of a society in which all individuals had equal opportunities not to gain access to privilege but to develop their own "special capacities for leading a rich life."[6]

Naturally, just like you, I have thought about these issues for years, which is why I have never been impressed by the education policies of any political party. But the issues they are struggling with from their particular assumptions are real enough and are at the heart of many of the economic and social problems that form the backdrop to our educational dilemmas. We are in fact talking about resourcefulness, which is an aspect not just of our aims in schooling but of whole cultures of child-rearing and parenthood and our attitudes to childhood.

In search of the secrets of education for resourcefulness, my best guide has been, not an educator, nor a member of the battalion of sociologists of education, but a historian, Paul Thompson. You will know him, if you do, in a number of different guises, most likely as a practitioner and advocate of oral history and family history, or perhaps as a historian of Victorian architecture and design. He wrote the best general book about William Morris, a continually-reprinted Oxford

paperback, *The Work of William Morris*,[7] which should not be confused with the biography by his namesake E. P. Thompson.

Paul Thompson was the obvious choice by the William Morris Society to give its Kelmscott Lecture in 1990, the centenary of the publication of Morris's utopian novel *News from Nowhere*. This lecture is now available in print.[8] It's the kind of publication that an earlier generation would have called "a little gem", as it is so full of unexpected insights and connections. As you might expect, Thompson traces the links between Morris' vision and today's worries about environmental and ecological issues, about the concept of world citizenship and the transformation of ordinary life.

But the most striking aspect relates to Thompson's own work. He is a pioneer of "oral history" and in the 1960s conducted life-history interviews with 440 people born between 1870 and 1906. Unexpectedly, he found in his book *The Edwardians* that there was one community in Britain where child-rearing was more gentle, generous and civilized than in the ordinary British family of those days of any class. This was among the crofter-fishing families of Shetland.[9] Intrigued by this he was able, many years later, to study the fishing industry all around the British coasts in his book *Living the Fishing*.

In the capitalist trawling industry, now dead, he found long hours, low pay, "terrible violence both at work and in the home" resulting eventually in the "destruction of the workforce and the demise of the industry itself". In the Western Isles he found areas "where religious pessimism combined with a rigidly hierarchical family system to repress and stifle new ways of working." In the Shetland islands, as had been hinted by his interviews with an earlier generation, he found that "the

culture deliberately encouraged thinking and adaptability and innovation among ordinary people."

Then he makes the important connection between child-rearing and a creative economy, for he goes on to observe that:

> In the Shetlands in particular . . . there is a very special way of bringing up children which, instead of emphasizing control and physical discipline, encourages reasoning and discussion. Children are brought up from a very early age to be part of adult society. If you go to a Shetland concert, there will be little children wandering around; nobody minds, and the children behave themselves. Shetlanders typically believe in social and moral self-responsibility and expect children to think for themselves from a very early age. They also have a high degree of literacy, and indeed the highest library circulation in Britain. It is my belief that this exceptional family and community culture explains how ordinary working families, who fifty years ago had a standard of living little above an elementary subsistence level, have since the last war shown a striking technical inventiveness and adaptability in taking up new ways of fishing. One of the Shetland fishing islands has, astonishingly, the highest capital investment per household of any community in Britain: yet this is an investment in boats owned by ordinary working families. It is an extraordinary manifestation of the potential of ordinary men and women.

This observation led me back to his 400-page study of the fishing industry. Economic theories of "Modernization", he notes, contrast societies seen as "slumbering in traditional immobility and poverty", with developed societies "which have

earned their present affluence through adaptability, acceptance of the logic of science, the cash nexus and individualism." He used the Shetland example to show that there are other paths to prosperity, "in some cases based on the re-creation of more 'traditional' attitudes, such as work organization round the family boat rather than wage labour."

Who would have guessed 50 years ago, he asked, that the modern capitalist trawler fleets of ports like Fleetwood, Hull and Aberdeen would reach bankruptcy and closure, while the prosperous crew from a remote island who, "by the normal logic of 'progress', ought to have been driven out of business decades ago could afford to lay up their half-million pound ship for a week, in order to take in the hay harvest on their crofts?" For people here who know about the problems of the fishing industry, I should interpolate the point that it isn't the Shetland fishermen who are greedily plundering the seas by an indiscriminate scooping up of the whole fish population of a large area. In Cornwall last summer I was talking to David Chapple of the South West Handline Fishermen's Association, who of all innocent parties found themselves victimized by the quota system. The Minister replied to their complaint that any increase in their quota would have to be at the expense of other areas where the local Fish Producers' Organizations had declined to accept a reduced quota. To which the Shetland fishermen, at the other extremity of the British Isles, were a sole exception, replying that they would be willing. This recent fact adds to Thompson's emphasis on the constellations of beliefs, values and attitudes which are so contrasted between one community and another. And his final point in studying these contrasts is that:

> It is not the egalitarianism of the wider society which has stifled creativity and forced innovators into social isolation, but its demand for the social conformity and quiescence necessary to maintain inequality. The importance of the fishing communities is that they show the viability of an alternative way: for it is only such socially isolated groups which have been able to sustain up to the present the truer form of egalitarianism which fosters real social independence and individuality.[10]

Paul Thompson is now involved in an elaborate comparison of working and family lives in the motor industry, between Coventry and Turin. Both places have experienced in the last fifteen years the collapse of the giant factory economy: the very model and archetype of modern mass-production industry. In his Kelmscott lecture he went on to say:

> . . . I found that while the English city in the face of that crisis seemed depressed and hopeless, the Italian city was unexpectedly optimistic, indeed booming with new firms, at all social levels from engineering design to metal workshops and squatters' vegetable market allotments. Again I have been struck by apparent links between that inventive adaptability and the ways in which people are brought up in the two cities. In Coventry—perhaps as a result of more than three generations of factory work in Britain—interviews brought a picture of a very rigid type of socialization. In many families, children were still expected to be seen and not heard, for example at mealtimes, and indeed some are expected scarcely to talk or discuss at all with their parents. Parents seemed surprisingly unable to transmit either their ideas or hopes

> or their skills to them, and children were often harshly disciplined. In Turin, by contrast, children were brought up with a much more open expression of affection, and a rare use of physical punishment, while discussion at table was absolutely central to family life . . . The case of Turin is not unique: a similar economic development is found even more strikingly in Emilia-Romagna, where the remarkable contemporary prosperity of the region is based extensively on co-operatives . . . Such a democratic manufacturing economy has no parallel in this country.

Thompson's findings are based upon a large number of intensive family life-history interviews. My own impressions are more superficial, but they support him. It seems like a lifetime ago—it was in fact almost half a century—that I spent three years in Orkney and Shetland, and even then it was evident that families were better off than their equivalents in the North of Scotland mainland or the Western Isles which were very poor communities in those days. As to the small workshop economy of Northern Italy, I went to explore it in 1988, and there's a chapter in my book *Welcome, Thinner City* which tells you what I found, and where I remarked that:

> The economic life of Emilia-Romagna—where more than a third of the workforce is self-employed and where per capita incomes are the highest in Italy—is based on an accumulation of assumptions about capital and labour, and about the skill and autonomy of the individual worker that are scarcely grasped in our patronizing British attitudes towards the needs of small business. It is certainly impressive to see how so many people live in a world which is precisely that

> of pre-industrial society and is predicted as the likely pattern of post-industrial work: a 'belt and braces' combination of several sources of employment for the same individual, built around resourcefulness and adaptability and upon the needs of the season.[11]

These people don't follow the rules taught in British and American business schools. Just as Thompson noted that a Shetland family laid up their half-million-pound ship for a week to get in the hay, so I found in a six-man workshop with hundreds of pounds worth of machinery at Trebbo di Reno that two workers had taken time off to bring in the maize harvest.

Now you may have some misgivings about the good news I have been retailing. Why do I give such emphasis to the incomes and capital accumulation of the crofter-fisherfolk of Shetland or the small workshop economy of Northern Italy? Aren't there other dimensions to resourcefulness? Yes, of course there are. But my point is different. Alternatives to capitalist managerialism become increasingly attractive with the collapse of faith in other versions of socialism. And, as Thompson remarks and the recent history of Eastern Europe shows, "the suffocating impact and environmental insensitivity of the undemocratic centrally-planned 'command economy' has never been clearer." My sympathies are with all those people at the bottom of the pile in the dominant economy, pushed by government policy and the logic of the multi-national market economy into a so-called underclass of claimants, and denied by our culture any opportunity of climbing out. You may have another misgiving. Aren't I peddling the same kind of approach as half a dozen arrogant and ignorant Secretaries of State in the years since

1979 and urging that the schools should become nurseries of market entrepreneurialism? My first answer is "No, I'm not", but my second answer is that we deceive ourselves if we attribute this attitude to schooling to Mrs Thatcher and her government. The last time I had the pleasure of talking in this ancient hall I said:

> I do not believe that the roots of, or the cure for, our chronic economic malaise are to be found in the education system and, if it is true that the young do not like industrial jobs, at either a shop-floor or a graduate level (and it is symptomatic of the superficial nature of the debate that it fails to distinguish between the two), I think it ironical that instead of wanting to change the nature of industrial work, of wanting to make it an adventure instead of a penance, we should want to change the nature of the young.[12]

I was talking here on 22 April 1977 and I was criticizing the remarks of the then Welsh Secretary, Mr John Morris, who six months earlier announced that he had given "clear uncompromising guidance . . . circulated to every head teacher in the Principality, that the priority must be tilted towards the engineer, the scientist and the mathematician. And in addition our children must be taught the languages of Europe to such a degree of proficiency that they can sell and service our products in the countries of our trading partners." Direct ministerial intervention in school did not begin in 1979.

Politicians have a romantically Victorian approach to industry. They haven't noticed that the performing arts provide more employment in Britain and earn far more foreign currency for the British economy than the motor industry. Some of us think

they are also less lethal and more enjoyable. Perhaps Tony Weaver was right and not unrealistic in his espousal of a curriculum built around the arts. Think of the huge contribution of the art schools, at least until they were reformed in pursuit of 'academic rigour', to many fields outside the visual arts, like music and drama. Perhaps education for resourcefulness really would be an education through art, making us all remarkable for the very full use we make of our limited intelligence? I should also add that the small business owner is not at all like the entrepreneurial hero-figure of Thatcherite fantasy, apart from sharing the privilege of winding up in bankruptcy. The only sociological study of *The Real World of the Small Business Owner* reveals that they don't have ambitions to expand and become captains of industry, for "that would imply employing people and losing the personal relationships they like to have with a small number of workers." In fact the report by Richard Scase and Robert Goffe finds that "many small businessmen are closer to a kind of dropout. They disliked the whole modern capitalistic ethic, and especially being employed by others; instead they preferred to feel the satisfaction of providing a 'service' and doing a 'good job'."[13] Now one thing stands out from Paul Thompson's life-history interviews with crofter-fishing families and with industrial workers and that is the stress he places not on formal education, but on child-rearing. In Shetland, he said, "children are brought up from a very early age to be part of adult society", and in Turin "discussion at table was absolutely central to family life". What about the education system? I wouldn't dare comment on the quality of schooling in Shetland, not being into league tables. What would be our standard of comparison? But I do know a

few Italian teachers and they are bitterly critical of their system, envying the British Primary School as propagated twenty years ago in the series of pamphlets that you probably remember, sponsored by the Schools Council and the Ford Foundation and published by Macmillan, and now forgotten.

Now you and I realize all too well that schooling, in spite of the time it occupies, is only part of the whole process of cultural transmission, and often a very small part: just one of many influences. When I was involved in environmental education, we used to claim that this was not a "subject", but an aspect of every subject on the timetable. I am sure this is similarly true of education for resourcefulness. It happens, or doesn't happen, right across the curriculum. The oral history movement that Thompson draws upon brings out from plenty of people's memories teachers who evoked fear and resentment, but it also records the influence of some particular teacher who, in their testimony from years later, seemed to set them in motion like a giroscope. The resourcefulness of that teacher liberated their own resourcefulness, even in those who were able to put to "a very full use" a limited intelligence. I would suggest that this particular magic is at the core of education as if people matter.

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Human scale education develops the whole person, acknowledges the importance of relationships between teachers, pupils and parents, and with the environment, and takes place in small-scale settings where students feel secure and supported.

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